

SECTION III—THE FINAL OFFENSIVE

CHAPTER XI

THE DASH TO DAMASCUS

THE final phase of the Palestine Campaign, in which the force of the Turk was destroyed, began on September 19th; by the 30th the rout of his armies was complete. These twelve days covered one of the most remarkable cavalry movements in the history of mounted warfare. For the medical service of the Desert Mounted Corps they brought problems of immense difficulty, particularly in the moving of the medical units to keep pace with the advance, and at the same time to dispose of the casualties from a force which had outrun communications from its most advanced base and moved unsupported through hostile country. There were also the sick from a diseased and beaten enemy to be dealt with.

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By the beginning of September preparations and plans were complete for an offensive which had for its final objective¹ not a local or limited victory, but the complete elimination of the Turk from Palestine and Syria. The constituents of the British force available for this offensive were—taking them from west to east—the XXI, XX, and Desert Mounted Corps, making a total of 12,000 sabres, 57,000 rifles, and 540 guns. The Turkish forces opposing it were (in the same order) the Eighth and Seventh Armies west of the Jordan, and the Fourth Army east of and facing it, or at Amman; a total of 4,000 sabres, 32,000 rifles, and 400 guns.² The Turkish front line ran roughly parallel with the British from the coast just north of Arsuf to the Jordan a few miles north of the entry of the Wady Auja at its junction with the Jordan. East of the Jordan it bent south at right angles at the foot of the hills of Moab.

The coastal plain between the Judæan hills and the sea—the terrain which was to be the scene of the first stage in the advance of the mounted troops—gradually narrows to the north as the Judæan range divides and its north-western fork bends to reach the coast

The forces engaged

The terrain

¹ See p. 741 (chap. XII).

² The Turkish ration strength south of Damascus was over 100,000.

at Mount Carmel. North-east of this range lies the plain of Esdraelon (Armageddon), shaped like an arrowhead with its point towards Haifa on the coast and its barbs at Jenin on the south (where the Judæan range forks) and at Mount Tabor on the north. About the centre of the arrowhead is the village and railway junction of El Afule, and from here the shaft of the arrow runs down the Valley of Jezreel to Beisan and the Jordan beyond. The coastal plain is sandy, intersected by streams and in parts swampy. The only formed road ran parallel with the railway, close to the foot of the hills. Across the Mount Carmel range there was only one route suitable for wheeled transport, the Musmus pass (followed by the army of Thothmes III 3,400 years earlier). This was narrow and rough, and easily defended. The road through this pass debouches on the plain of Esdraelon at the village of El Lejjun (the ancient Megiddo—to which the battle owes its name). About five miles to the north-west is a track across the range passing from Jarak to Abu Shushe.

Attention may be directed to the account already given³ of the reorganisation of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force—which led to the replacement of fifty per cent of the British troops by Indians—and of the preparations, combatant and medical, made at the advanced base and on the lines of communication for a renewal of the offensive. It has also been explained that the trans-Jordan raids led the enemy to direct his attention to his eastern rather than his western flank.

Allenby's plan gave an important rôle to the mounted troops. While every effort was to be made beforehand to give the impression that the country east of the Jordan was the British objective, the attack was to be made on the coast where, through a breach to be made by the infantry, the mounted troops would pass in a wide flanking movement on the enemy's lines of communication, especially the railway. This ran from Deraa junction across the Jordan to Semakh on Lake Tiberias, and thence by a winding course to Nablus, the main line passing to Tulkeram at the edge of the coastal plain and on to Kalkilieh. Only one good road ran to the rear—that from

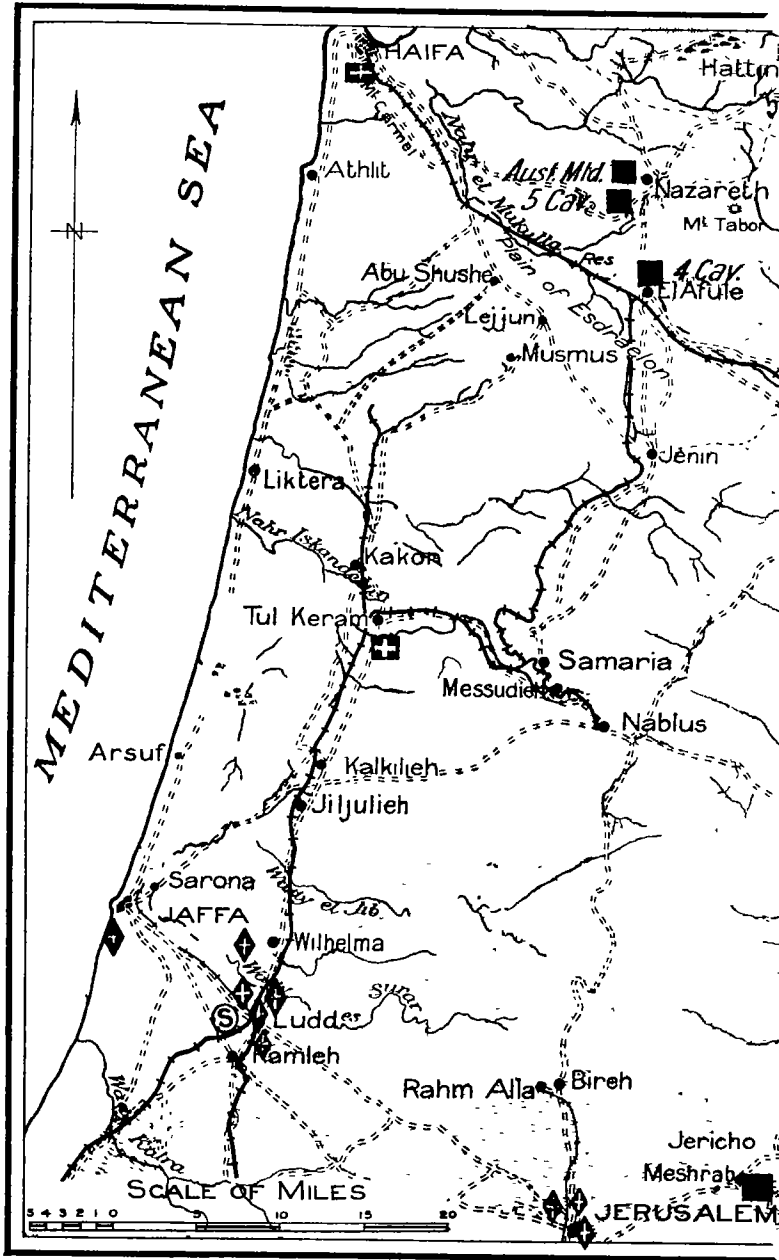
³ See p. 687.

Nablus to El Afule and Nazareth; of two others, which were of poor quality, one ran from Nablus to Beisan, the other to the Jordan at Jisr ed Damieh.

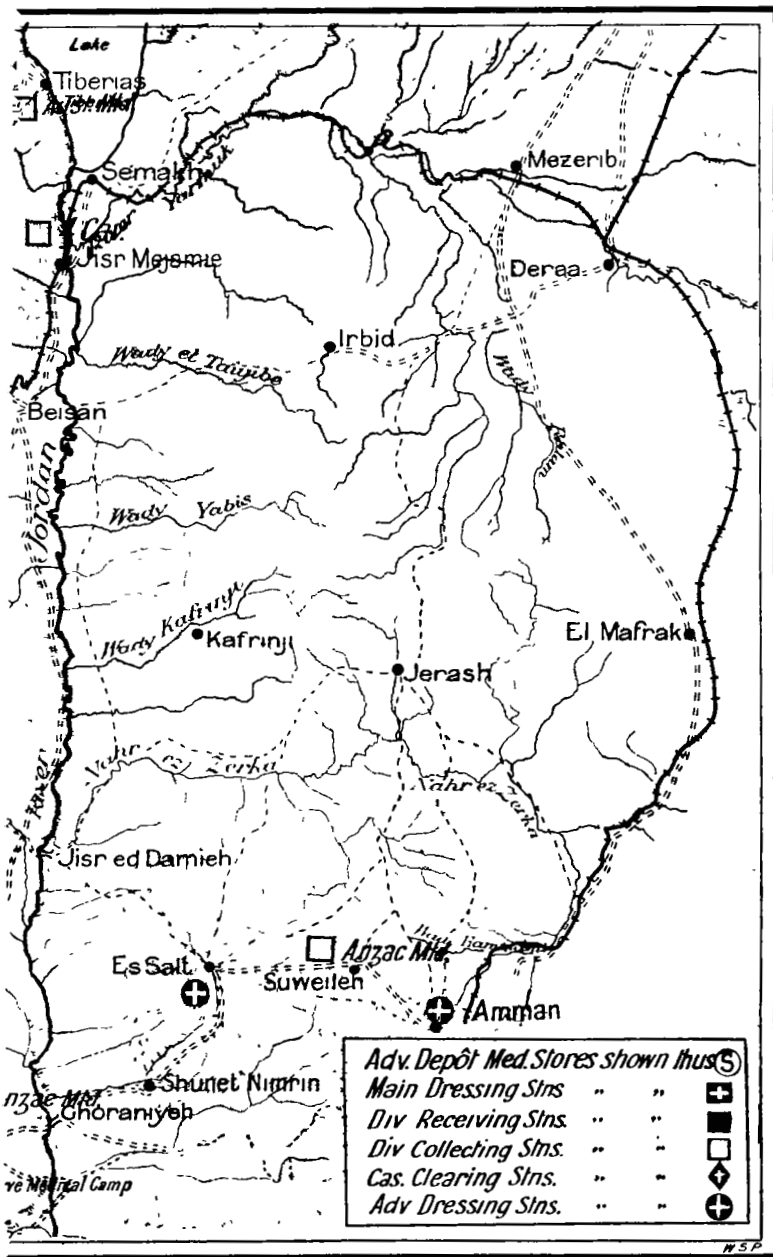
The detailed plan provided that at dawn, after concentrated bombardment, an assault should be made by the XXI Corps on the enemy's defences between the coast and the railway at Jiljulieh. These having been carried, the line would be swung north-east towards Messudieh, bending the enemy's right flank back to the Judæan hills. Through the gap the Desert Mounted Corps (4th and 5th Cavalry and Australian Mounted Divisions⁴) would pass, ride hard north along the coast, and, ignoring the enemy unless directly opposed, seize the two passes in the Mount Carmel range (Abu Shushe and Musmus). Then, passing through to the plain of Esdraelon, it would occupy El Afule, Beisan, Jenin, and the Jisr el Mejamie bridge, sending also a detachment to Nazareth, the headquarters of the Turkish Commander-in-Chief, Liman von Sanders. Twenty-four hours later the XX Corps in the hills north of Jerusalem would advance, simultaneously with the XXI Corps, on Nablus and towards the Jordan, and thus block the roads from the hills to the Jisr ed Damieh bridge. Meanwhile a special force (Chaytor's Force, consisting of the Anzac Mounted Division and eight battalions of infantry) was to secure the right flank and, by demonstrations, conceal the departure of the main body of cavalry; further, by bluffing the Turk into believing that an attack was projected towards Amman, it would prevail on him to hold troops east of the Jordan. When the advance of the Desert Mounted Corps up the plain should have progressed sufficiently, this force was to move on Jisr ed Damieh, Es Salt, and Amman.

The period 1st to 19th September was occupied in concentrating the cavalry divisions in the vicinity of Jaffa, the Jordan Valley defences being left meanwhile in the hands of Chaytor's Force. On September 9th the Desert Mounted Corps Headquarters moved to Jaffa. The keynote to success was secrecy, and very elaborate means were taken to ensure it. All moves to the west were by night, to the east by day.

⁴ The latter minus the 5th A.L.H. Bde., which (including a French cavalry detachment) was attached to the XXI Corps



THE END OF THE FIRST PHASE OF THE FINAL OFFENSIVE, SHOWING THE POSITION OF THE ARMY ON THE 27TH-28TH SEPTEMBER 1948



THE MEDICAL SITUATION IN THE DESERT MOUNTED CORPS, FEBRUARY, 1918.

In consequence little time was given for special preparation by the medical service in the mounted corps; but on September 1st the personnel was ordered to go into hard training for marching. For this advance divisional receiving stations were formed of two immobile sections instead of three. The 4th Cavalry Division receiving station was assembled only the day preceding the offensive; in the 5th Cavalry Division an order from a brigade commander, and without the knowledge of corps or divisional headquarters, led to sixty-eight Indians of the divisional receiving station being returned to the reinforcement camp a few hours before the attack. This ill-judged order, which caused great embarrassment and interfered with the whole plan of evacuation in the corps, was due to the fact that the formation had been on detached duty, and that neither brigade commander nor ambulance officers had realised that in a divisional formation the field ambulances are divisional troops and directly under the orders of the A.D.M.S. The Desert Mounted Corps Operating Unit and two malarial diagnosis stations⁵ accompanied the 4th Cavalry and Australian Mounted Divisions' receiving stations.

Heavy motor ambulance waggons were exchanged for light ones, and, profit being drawn from past experience, extra camels were obtained to carry a reserve supply of two days' rations and medical comforts for each divisional receiving station. Successful experiments were made in the use of motor tubes for dropping medical supplies and comforts from aeroplanes.

Arrangements by the D.D.M.S., Desert Mounted Corps, provided that mobile sections should accompany their brigades; personnel of the divisional receiving stations —marching on foot—and wheeled transport were to move in rear of their divisions.

The plan provided for receiving stations in echelon. The first was to be at Khurbet es Sumrah near the Musmus pass (5th Cavalry Division receiving station), the second at

⁵ As the country through which the corps was to advance was—on the authority of Major Austen—one of the most malarious in the world, and as the months of September and October were those in which the malignant tertian type—the most common—became especially epidemic, instructions were issued by the D.M.S., E.E.F., for the prophylactic administration of ten grains of quinine daily to all troops. The retention of mosquito nets was also recommended in the Desert Mounted Corps.

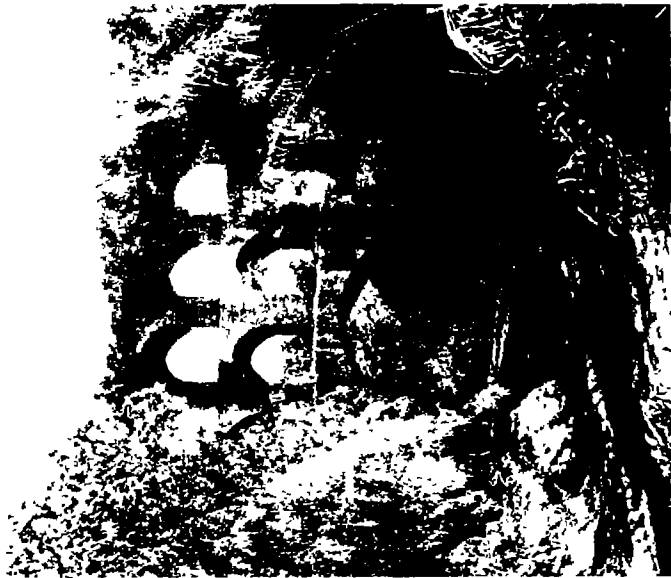
Tulkeram (4th Cavalry), with the Corps Operating Unit, the malarial diagnosis stations, and the Australian Mounted Division receiving station—the last-named in reserve.⁶ From Tulkeram motor ambulance convoy cars would operate for infantry and mounted troops alike. Alternative plans provided for failure to capture Tulkeram and for inability of the motor ambulance transport to negotiate the road up the coast.

As a base for the evacuation of the mounted troops, a combined clearing hospital was opened by the D.M.S., E.E.F.,⁷ at Wilhelma. By order of the Deputy Adjutant-General, Egyptian Expeditionary Force, No. 35 Motor Ambulance Convoy—still the only one in the force—was placed under the Headquarters of Palestine L. of C. To augment the accommodation at the new advanced base of operations, special camps were opened for some 5,000 light cases.

The attack at dawn on **September 19th** by the XXI Corps was attended by complete success; a wide breach was soon made in the enemy line, through which the **The attack** cavalry dashed. Little opposition was encountered in the ride up the plain, all the objectives being reached ahead of time. The 5th Cavalry Division, moving by way of Liktera, Jarak, and Abu Shushe, directed one brigade against Nazareth and a second against El Afule, which was captured at daylight on the **20th**, the troops having covered sixty-five miles in twenty-two hours. The 4th Cavalry Division, moving by the Musmus pass, on the 20th occupied Beisan (eighty-five miles in thirty-four hours); the Australian Mounted Division on the same day moved across the plain of Esdraelon and captured Jenin, thus closing the Dothan pass north of Nablus. In the meantime, while the outlet to the north was blocked by the Desert Mounted Corps and the XXI Corps had continued its relentless pressure, the XX Corps moved through the hills on Nablus.

⁶ See *Appendix No. 4*. An initial arrangement, approved by the D.M.S., E.E.F., provided that wounded from mounted troops should be evacuated to the infantry main dressing-station to be established at Tulkeram, and that eight motor ambulance waggons from the convoy should be attached to the mounted corps. This order was rescinded before the operations, greatly to the detriment of the mobility of the unmounted receiving station personnel and to evacuation from the Desert Mtd. Corps.

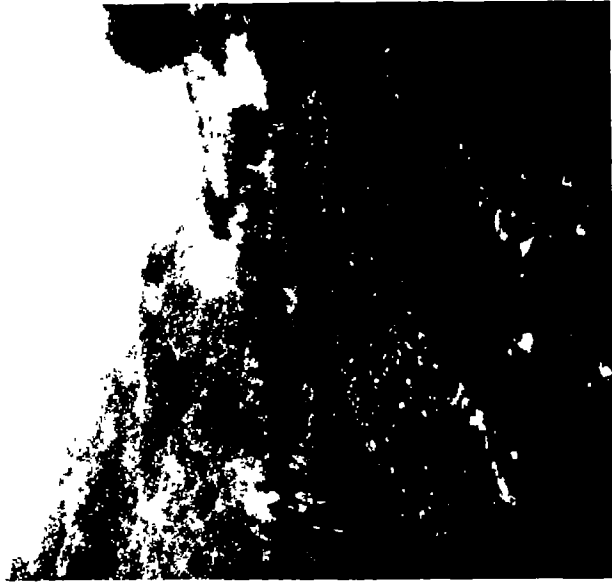
⁷ On the day of the offensive the D.M.S., E.E.F., Surg.-Gen. W. T. Swan, was replaced by Col. R. H. Luce, D.D.M.S., XX Corps.



106. ANCIENT AQUEDUCT AT AIN ID DUK IN THE
JORDAN VALLEY

Note the canalisation of the stream in the
foreground

Aust. War Memorial Official Photo No B239



107. AUSTRALIAN LIGHT HORSEMEN PROCEEDING
THROUGH THE MUS MUS PASS DURING THE
FINAL OFFENSIVE

Aust. War Memorial Collection No. H14669

To face p. 718



108 STAFF OF THE GERMAN HOSPITAL AND A.A.M.C. OFFICERS AT JFNIN
 During the final advance the hospital was taken over by the
 3rd Australian Light Horse Field Ambulance

*Lent by Major R. G. Woods, A.A.M.C.
 Aust. War Memorial Collection No. 42733*



109 PART OF A HOSPITAL ATTACHED TO THE TURKISH PRISONER-OF-WAR
 CAMP AT KAUKAB, DAMASCUS

An enemy doctor (Syrian) is in the foreground

Aust. War Memorial Official Photo No. B304

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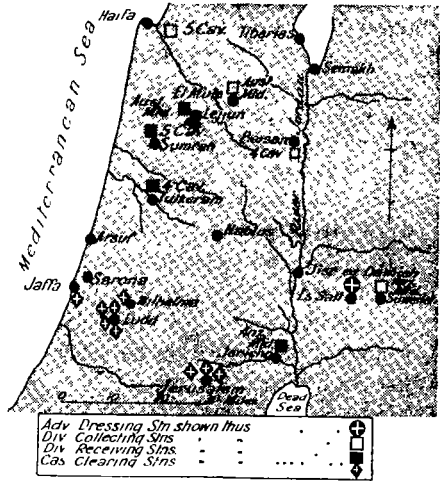
The casualties in the Desert Mounted Corps formations during this first phase of the advance were trifling. While the mobile sections kept pace with their **Medical work** brigades, the divisional receiving stations also arrived at their destination ahead of time and were established in accordance with plan, the 4th at Tulkeram with the Australian in reserve, the 5th at Khurbet es Sumrah. All the mobile sections, however, as also the diagnosis stations, were forced by the heavy sand to abandon some equipment and so lighten the waggon loads. The motor transport of the Australian Mounted Division could not get through, but rejoined its division at Jenin on the 21st, when the main road was clear. The motor ambulances of the other two divisions filled up with wounded infantry, and were diverted to Tulkeram, rejoining their divisions on the plain of Esdraelon next day.

In the early hours of the **22nd** the Jisr ed Damieh bridge—the last outlet from the *cul de sac* in which the Turkish force was contained—was closed by Chaytor's Force, and during the next two days the Seventh and Eighth Turkish Armies were annihilated or captured. On the **23rd** a brigade of the 5th Cavalry Division occupied Acre and Haifa, and on the **24th** the 4th Light Horse Brigade, after a sharp fight at Semakh, advanced to Tiberias. During the next two days, **25th** and **26th**, the Australian and 5th Cavalry Divisions concentrated at Tiberias, the 4th at Beisan, preparatory to an advance on Damascus.

During this second stage also of the advance (22nd-25th) the battle casualties in the Desert Mounted Corps were few; they occurred chiefly in the 4th Cavalry Division south of Beisan, where they were sustained in intercepting retreating bodies of enemy infantry, the 5th Cavalry Division at Haifa, and the Australian Mounted Division at Semakh. The work of the field ambulances lay chiefly in the transportation and care of the large numbers of sick prisoners, who were collapsing all along the line of retreat. In Jenin, which boasted a fully equipped German hospital staffed by trained army nurses, 300 enemy patients were found, and 360 in Nazareth. These, with the nursing staffs, were taken over. As many patients as were fit to travel were evacuated to Tulkeram. To keep pace with the lengthening lines of

communication of the mounted troops, now extending for some fifty miles from Beisan to Tulkeram *viâ* the Musmus pass, the Australian Mounted Division receiving station was moved up to El Lejjun, and soon afterwards the 5th Cavalry Division receiving station was moved from Khurbet es Sumrah to El Afule, leap-frogging the Australian. Both evacuated all light cases through the Musmus pass,⁸ *viâ* Sumrah, by returning empty supply motor lorries. Serious cases, brought to the Australian Mounted Division receiving station at El Lejjun in the divisional motor ambulances, went by heavy motor ambulance waggons—six of which were now attached to the corps—to the 4th Cavalry Division receiving station at Tulkeram, by the good road through Jenin and Messudieh. Thence they passed to the casualty clearing station at Wilhelma, and so to railhead at Ludd.

By September 25th the infantry had reached the plain of Esdraelon, and on the 26th had occupied Haifa. To understand the subsequent course of events and the dramatic final stage of the advance and total overthrow of the Turkish force in Syria, it is necessary to turn to the Fourth Turkish Army east of the Jordan, attacked on the one side by Chaytor's Force and on the other by the Arab Army of Emir Feisal.



Medical situation in the Desert Mounted Corps, 24th September, 1918

**Jordan and East—
"Chaytor's Force"**

⁸ It was sought at this time to carry evacuations down the shorter and better road through Jenin and Nablus to the casualty clearing station at Jerusalem, but the plan did not fit in with the arrangements of the D.M.S., E.E.F.

The medical administration of Chaytor's Force devolved on the A.D.M.S., Anzac Mounted Division, Colonel D. G. Croll. In addition to the divisional medical units of the Anzac Mounted Division there were attached to this force the 1/1st Welsh and 157th Indian Field Ambulances, together with the Anzac Field Laboratory. A new operating unit was formed for the force from personnel of the 14th Australian General and 2nd Stationary Hospitals.⁹ At the time of the advance the immobile section of one light horse field ambulance was in charge of the rest station at Jerusalem; the remaining two, with a section each from the 1/1st Welsh and 157th Indian Field Ambulances, formed the personnel of the Anzac Mounted Division receiving station. This unit, of a total strength of 8 officers and 145 rank and file, formed the pivot on which the system of evacuation for Chaytor's Force was based. Attached to it were the operating unit, the Anzac Field Laboratory, and a detachment from an Egyptian hospital. It was established on the site which had been occupied by the main dressing-station during the trans-Jordan raids, and which for several months had been held by different receiving stations. It had accommodation for 200 cases in stone and mud huts and for 400 more in tents. In the adjoining abandoned corps headquarters, which had been left standing, there was accommodation for 700. At one time during these operations the receiving station held 1,225 cases of sick and wounded, for whose accommodation tents were collected from the dummy camps left standing in the valley.

The activities of Chaytor's Force may be described briefly. On **September 19th** and the following three days demonstrations were made to the north on the west side of the Jordan Valley by the New Zealand Mounted Brigade and British West Indian troops. Casualties from this advance and from the capture, on the **22nd**, of the bridge-head at Jisr ed Damieh, which, as previously mentioned, closed the only remaining line of retreat of the Seventh and Eighth Turkish Armies, numbered seventy-two, who, with 400 sick, were evacuated by camels and motor ambulances to the divisional

⁹ Equipment for the operating unit was supplied largely by the Australian Red Cross Society, help being also given by the American Red Cross Society.

receiving station. On the **22nd** the Fourth Turkish Army, east of the Jordan, in danger of isolation from the north, began a retreat on Deraa, and Chaytor's Force was thrown across the Jordan in rapid pursuit. Advancing up the Jisr ed Damieh track, and encountering little opposition, the New Zealand Mounted Brigade occupied Es Salt on the evening of the **23rd**. The 1st Light Horse Brigade moved up the Umm esh Shert track and the 2nd round the south flank of the Shunet Nimrin position, which was then evacuated by the enemy. On the evening of the **24th** Chaytor's Force moved from Es Salt against Amman, which was captured by the mounted troops on the **25th**.

With evacuation based on the divisional receiving station and passing *viâ* Ghoraniyeh bridge, the mobile sections of the field ambulances, leaving their wheeled transport at the foothills to follow by the Shunet Nimrim-Es Salt road, but taking the camel transport, climbed the hills by the Umm esh Shert and Jisr ed Damieh tracks, following behind the brigades. For the attack on Amman a divisional collecting station was established at Suweileh by the immobile section of the 1st Light Horse Field Ambulance and the Anzac (No. 7) Sanitary Section, both of which arrived there from Jerusalem after an exhausting march and was sent on by motor ambulance waggons. These had arrived early in the day (25th) preceded by the wheeled vehicles. On the fall of Amman a dressing-station was opened in the ruins of the Roman amphitheatre. Two enemy hospitals in the town held 480 cases, packed together on the floor, filthy and verminous. The number soon rose to some 1,000 or so from outlying enemy sick. They were evacuated with a Turkish medical staff to Jerusalem as soon as possible by motor lorries. In addition to the care of these prisoners the 1st Light Horse Field Ambulance admitted, up to September 30th, 268 sick and wounded light horse troops. Evacuation from Amman was now entirely by motor ambulance waggons—a contrast indeed to the first attack on the town. The sanitary section soon left the collecting station for its proper work, and found much to do.

The subsequent events in connection with this force may conveniently be told here. After the capture of the town

the regiments were kept occupied in making the area untenable to the Turkish army advancing northward from the Hejaz. On **September 29th** the latter, numbering 4,500, surrendered to the 2nd Light Horse Brigade. There followed the unique picture of captured Turks, fully armed, holding a circular position in conjunction with their captors, whom they greatly outnumbered, to keep off the Arabs—the allies of the British—who were bent on looting and murder—to them the natural sequel to a victory. Five hundred seriously sick from these prisoners required evacuation.

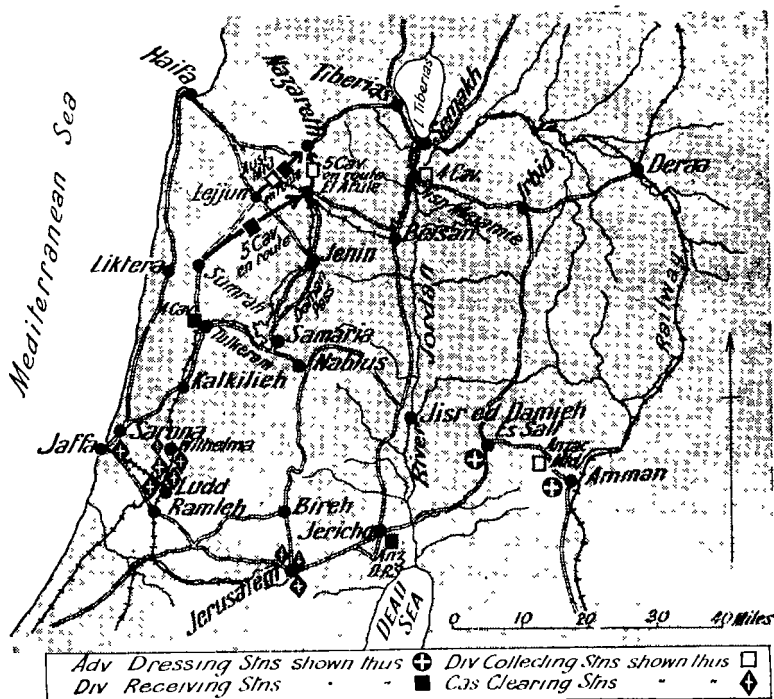
On **October 1st** the 2nd Light Horse and New Zealand Mounted Brigades began their return march to Deiran near Ramleh, leaving the 1st Light Horse Brigade in and around Amman. During the last few days the sick rate had risen somewhat suddenly. The returning troops on their march back to Jerusalem, and coincidentally those left behind in Amman, were struck by a heavy outburst of disease. During the ten days September 30th to October 9th 1,269 British and Indian troops were evacuated from Amman sick. In Amman this outbreak threw very heavy work on the divisional collecting station, which had been brought forward from Suweileh on September 30th. With its small personnel it had under its care at one time as many as 246 cases, the majority seriously ill. The greater part of the evacuation of these to Jericho was carried out by motor lorries, motor ambulances being available only for the most severe cases. The journey to Jericho, which took eight to ten hours by lorry and eight hours by motor ambulance, was too fatiguing to be accomplished in one stage, and it was therefore broken at a point two miles south of Es Salt. Here the Welsh Field Ambulance, which had been sent back from Es Salt, fed the patients and rested them for two hours. One group of motor ambulances worked between Amman and the Welsh Field Ambulance, another rearwards to Jericho. From the Anzac Mounted Division receiving station near Jericho motor lorries and a few cars of No. 35 Motor Ambulance Convoy carried out evacuation to a casualty clearing station at Jerusalem.

The battle casualties sustained by Chaytor's Force were 27 killed, 7 missing, 105 wounded. Prisoners captured totalled

10,322, among whom the sick rate was very heavy and, coinciding with the outbreak in the troops, threw a heavy strain on the medical service in all its departments.¹⁰ Detailed consideration of these epidemics is conveniently deferred for the moment.

To return to the main force now concentrating west of Lake Tiberias for an advance on Damascus. By General Allenby's new order, issued on the 25th, the Australian Mounted Division, followed by the 5th Cavalry Division, was to move from Tiberias to the crossing of the Upper Jordan at Jisr Benat Yakub (Bridge of Jacob's Daughters) and thence by the direct road to Damascus. The 4th Cavalry Division would cross the Lower Jordan and march *viâ* Irbid—Er Rente-Mezerib in order, if possible, to cut off the remains of the Fourth Turkish Army now retiring from Chaytor's Force and closely pursued by the Arabs. It was evident that evacuation to Tulkeram, 140 miles from Damascus, would be impossible with the number of motor ambulances possessed by the corps. Nazareth, forty-one miles nearer Damascus, though nine miles from a railway, appeared the obvious place on which to base evacuation, since it contained already organised hospitals in good stone buildings and the line of supplies at this time passed through it. The line of evacuation from it would depend entirely on whether supplies were to be brought from Haifa after sea transport, or *viâ* El Afule from the advanced base. Accordingly on the 25th and 26th the Australian and 5th Cavalry Divisions' receiving stations were brought up and the hospital accommodation thoroughly organised under the D.A.D.M.S., Desert Mounted Corps, Major A. Leggat, R.A.M.C. The fine French and Austrian hospitals, and the inferior German, were taken over by the Australian units, and a large Carmelite monastery was organised for 600 by the 5th Cavalry Division receiving station. The personnel of a casualty clearing station was to be sent from the base by the D.M.S., E.E.F., and medical stores by sea to Haifa. Casualties from the 4th Cavalry Division were at this time held in its divisional collecting

¹⁰ The Anzac Mtd. Div. receiving station, through which all the sick and wounded passed, treated, in addition to 7,095 sick from the Force, 1,346 Egyptians and 1,277 prisoners of war—a total of 9,718 sick.



Medical situation in the Desert Mounted Corps, 26th September, 1918

station at Jisr el Mejamie, where they remained until the repair of the railway to El Afule, whither the 4th Cavalry Division receiving station was sent on the 28th.

Up to this time the number of wounded had been small, and that of sick also inconsiderable.

Meanwhile the formations of the Desert Mounted Corps had entered on their final dash to Damascus. The advance was made in two converging lines, with the object of intercepting the remains of the Fourth Turkish Army now approaching Deraa with the Arabs in pursuit. The 4th Cavalry Division moved from Beisan on the

Sept. 27-
Oct. 1—the
dash to
Damascus

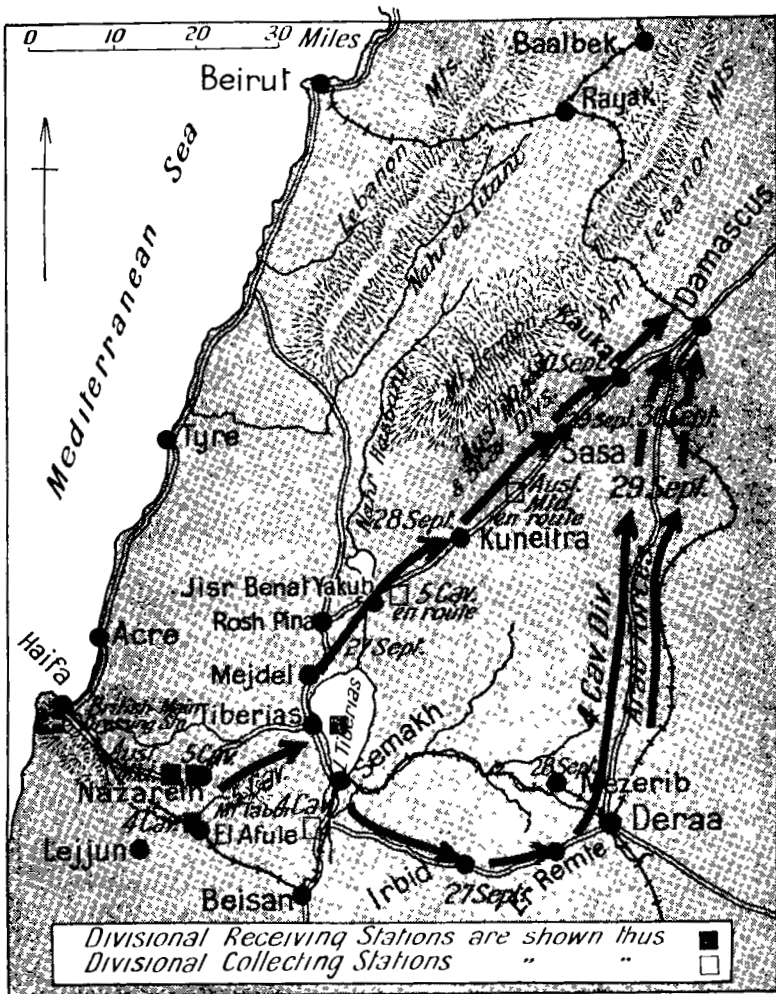
27th and made direct for Deraa, the distance to Damascus being 120 miles. The Australian Mounted Division moved by a western route which ran from the crossing of the Jordan

at Jisr Benat Yakub by a straight road to Damascus—ninety miles. This crossing was carried after sharp fighting. Together with the 5th Cavalry Division, which had moved over from the coast, and with the headquarters of the corps, the Australian Mounted Division set out on its task of fighting its way to reach Damascus in front of the sick and starving but still undefeated remains of the three Turkish armies, which, between 20,000 and 30,000 strong, was now making a bitter rearguard fight for the same goal, pursued and harassed by the 4th Cavalry Division and the Arab force. The former of these, after severe engagements at Irbid and Er Remte, left Deraa on the right and moved north up the left side of the Hejaz railway, with the Arab force on the right. The eastern and western columns of the Desert Mounted Corps and the Arab army reached Damascus almost simultaneously on the evening of **September 30th**—the western British column having been delayed by rearguard actions—and captured almost all that remained of the Fourth Turkish Army. On **October 1st** Damascus was occupied.

An important feature of this—as of most rapid advances—was the fact that the force outran the columns of supply.

**Difficulties of
services of
maintenance**

The crux of the situation in this respect was the damage done to the railway from Haifa to Semakh, and the very bad condition of the road from the Jordan at Jisr Benat Yakub for two miles towards Kuneitra. The medical service being, equally with supply, dependent on the existence of roads or railways for carrying out its function, was affected in like manner; and in its case there was added the fact that its special transport—in the form of motor ambulance waggons which alone could cope with the problem of clearing serious cases along the lines of communication—was totally inadequate to the demands. When the final dash to Damascus was begun, the supply route ran from Haifa *viâ* Nazareth to Tiberias, and thence across the Jordan at Jisr Benat Yakub and so to Kuneitra; the eastern force was supplied through Semakh from Tiberias. Fed by returning lorries of supply, the hospital accommodation at Nazareth filled rapidly, but cleared slowly. At the same time the situation as regards evacuation both to and from this, the forward hospital centre,



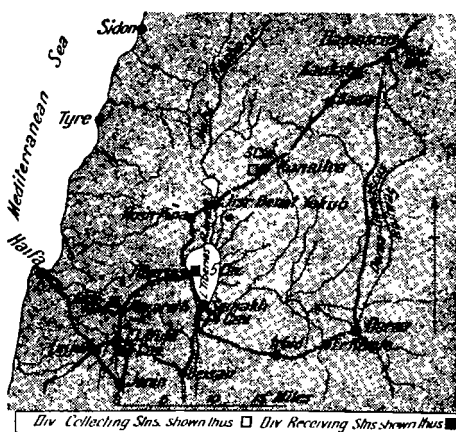
THE ADVANCE OF THE DESERT MOUNTED CORPS, SHOWING THE MEDICAL SITUATION ON 30TH SEPTEMBER, 1918

became gravely prejudiced, the town indeed being rendered valueless for that purpose by an unexpected change in the route of supply which was to be coincident with the repair of the railway between Haifa and Semakh, and which, after a period of uncertainty very disconcerting to the medical service, was put into effect on September 30th. The medical situation at this date was difficult, not to say precarious. At Nazareth the Australian and 5th Cavalry Division receiving stations held 500 casualties, now almost without means of evacuation; the 4th Cavalry Division receiving station at El Afule held 150, its collecting station at Jisr el Mejamie 120; both were for the time without means of evacuation. A large number of casualties from the fighting at Kuneitra were expected to arrive at Semakh

on September 30th. To meet the immediate situation, an Indian medical officer, with a small party from the 4th Cavalry Division receiving station, was sent to Semakh; the receiving station itself was cleared by train and sent there to open. This move was followed by that of the 5th Cavalry Division receiving station from Nazareth to Tiberias,

the casualties remaining in Nazareth being concentrated in the Australian Mounted Division receiving station. Apprised of the situation by telephone, the D.M.S., E.E.F., arranged for the evacuation of the cases from Nazareth by motor ambulance convoy, for the obtaining of medical stores by special transport, and for

the sending up of a third operating team; the casualty clearing station intended for Nazareth was deflected to Haifa.



Medical situation in the Desert Mounted Corps, 1st October, 1918

By this time the Desert Mounted Corps was in Damascus, where it was soon face to face with a remarkable situation presently to be described. Along the route of both columns collections of wounded and (now in increasing numbers) sick were held in the collecting stations or in small centres along the route, evacuated, as opportunity arose, by motor lorries of supply. Slight cases went to Tiberias or Semakh.¹¹ From

Evacuation the Jordan to Kuneitra the road was found
stopped to be so bad that it had been decided to take all the serious cases on to Damascus, and the A.D.M.S., Australian Mounted Division (Colonel R. Fowler), was instructed to take over a building suitable for the purpose as soon as possible after arrival in that town.¹²

¹¹ On Oct. 1 cholera broke out among the civil population in Tiberias. The only line of communication of the force ahead ran through this small town, and the outbreak was therefore a distinct menace. The D.A.D.M.S., Desert Mtd. Corps, was sent from Nazareth to deal with it. rigorous measures were taken, and the epidemic was quickly stamped out. Only one white trooper was affected.

¹² For the medical service this advance from Jaffa to Damascus presented one important analogy with that from Beersheba to Jaffa, namely, the demonstration afforded by events at Ameidat and Nazareth of the importance of close relations between the Medical Department and the "Q" Branch.